



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10

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OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

June 20, 2014

James W. Balsinger, Ph.D.
Administrator, Alaska Region
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802

RE: EPA comments on the Management of the Steller Sea Lion Protection Measures for Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area Final Environmental Impact Statement, EPA Project # 01-061-NOA.

Dear Dr. Balsinger:

We have reviewed the above-mentioned Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in accordance with our responsibilities under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

In our July 12, 2013 comments on the Draft EIS, we recognized the effort of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to produce a thorough analysis that articulates the anticipated impacts of a complex proposal and applauded your partnerships with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in developing the EIS. We identified Alternative 5 as a practical combination of some of the more beneficial aspects of other alternatives for the Atka mackerel, Pacific cod and Pollock fisheries, based in large part in response to stakeholder concerns identified during scoping. We also recognized that an intensive monitoring program will be implemented with this alternative, and adjustments made as results are assessed. We did not have concerns regarding the preferred alternative and offered no additional suggestions for further minimizing impacts.

The FEIS continues to identify modified Alternative 5 as the NFMS preferred alternative. We support this decision and recommend that this alternative be selected in the Record of Decision.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this FEIS. If you have questions concerning our comments, please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or reichgott.christine@epa.gov, or you may contact Jennifer Curtis of my staff in Anchorage at (907) 271-6324 or curtis.jennifer@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Christine B. Reichgott", is positioned above the typed name.

Christine B. Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediments Management Unit